

## **St. John's-St. Luke Evangelical Church**

2120 Russell

Local	✓	6/25/82
State		
State Marker		
National	✓	4/22/82



St. John's-St. Luke



### **Historic overview:**

St. John's-St. Luke is the oldest German Protestant church in Detroit and an example of changing tastes and building technologies at the turn of the twentieth century. Built in 1873-4, St. John's was designed by the famous German-American architect Julius Hess. It is a fine example of High Victorian Gothic design with a significant lighting system and a noteworthy organ. Reverend Schmid, the so-called father of German Protestantism in Michigan, on his way to Ann Arbor, was stranded in Detroit on a Sunday in 1833, and he preached to a hastily gathered audience that would begin St. John's. The congregation became the fourth organized religious group in the city.

During WWI, the life of the Church was dramatically changed. Partly as a result of the anti-German sentiment of the period, within a span of four years during the war the congregation diminished by 50% as German-Americans shed their ethnic identity to blend into the greater Detroit community. As members of the congregation moved, St. John's became the mother church for 12 other Protestant congregations. The church experienced a brief revival in the 1930s as the pastor pressed for American intervention against Hitler. Popular German pastors were brought to the city to preach and began an effort to send money to Germany to get Jews out of Europe.

The neighborhood declined during the 40s and 50s, which threatened St. John's existence. Therefore, it merged with St. Luke's to form St. John's-St. Luke. Meanwhile, the total clearance of the Germantown section for urban renewal and its redevelopment as the handsome Lafayette Park residential area stabilized the church's environment. Today St. John's-St. Luke is a vital institution.

